



February 1, 2006

Dear Community Friends;

### **Reporting Crime to the Police**

Once again we want to cover the issue of crime reporting. There are many concerns people have about calling 9-1-1 and we're hoping that this newsletter will answer some questions, dispel some concerns, and debunk some myths.

First, if you experience a situation requiring police response, call 9-1-1. Officers are dispatched through 9-1-1, not by the precinct. So, do not call the precinct to have an officer respond.

Do not go to the Precinct to make the report. If you show up at the precinct to make an incident report, the desk officer at the precinct will most likely direct you to the phone in the lobby to call 9-1-1 to have an officer dispatched to take the report. You'll save yourself time effort and frustration by just calling 9-1-1 and letting the operator direct you from there. Either an officer will be dispatched to your location, or the report can be taken over the phone.

### **When To Call 9-1-1**

What warrants a call to police? Some of the things we covered last time:

- When you have a Police, Fire or Medical emergency.
- To report a crime that is in progress, or has just occurred.
- There is a situation that could, or does, pose a danger to life, property, or both.
- There is suspicious activity involving a Person(s), or Vehicle, that appears criminal in intent.

Pinpointing what precisely constitutes "suspicious" behavior can be difficult, so it is important to distinguish between true illegal activity and activities of people who just live their lives differently than yours.

We define suspicious circumstances as those in which there is indication that a criminal activity has occurred or is about to occur, but in which the caller him/herself has not observed enough to factually verify. So, how do you know what's suspicious? We'll cover that next time.

### **"Don't Tell 'Em I Told You"**

Important things to remember about reporting crime or suspicious activity to the police:

- **You do not have to give your name.**
- **You can remain anonymous.**
- **You can request that your information not be disclosed**
- **You can request not to be contacted by an officer.**

We prefer that you do give your name and contact information in the event that officers or detectives need to contact you for follow-up information. You can give your information and request that it not be disclosed. In that regard, only law enforcement will see your contact information.

So, unless you tell them, the suspects are not going to know it is you who called on them (unless you're standing on the front stoop, phone in hand, pointing at them). You've said to us "Do Not Disclose," "Do Not Contact."

While you do not have to give your name and can request no contact, be aware that the lack of witness or complainant information often inhibits law enforcement's ability to properly follow-up and investigate an incident.

Many people don't report crime because of fear of retaliation. In truth, I've been in this business over 15 years and I've never seen retaliation against someone who reported suspicious activity or a property or drug crime to 9-1-1.

Next time - more on crime reporting.

Take Care and Stay Safe!

Mark Solomon, South Precinct Crime Prevention